

As the cabman gave a crack of his whip a white-capped maid ran down the steps bearing a large bunch of pure white roses.

"Wait," she cried, "here is her bouquet."

The maid in the hansom peered out, reached to grasp the fading bunch that her young mistress had recently carried and which had been thoughtlessly left by the friend to whom she tossed them.

"They are withered," she called out. "Give them to that boy." The cabby drove on.

The dirty hands of the child reached out to receive the gift. The roses did not appear wilted to him. Now and then he had picked up two or three flowers that had been thrown into the street from a florist's shop, but his wildest dreams had never touched such a mammoth bunch.

Hurrying down the avenue he turned into the side street, paused a moment to sniff with his small nose poked into the center of his sweet burden, and then rushed on. The child had not been home since Wednesday, but that was not an unusual occurrence. When a mother is sick and has to sew on vests all day, it is easy enough for a child of the street to remain away and not be missed.

At the corner a big policeman was having a flirtation with a nurse. The officer plucked a couple of roses from the bunch, tossed them over to the maid with a grin, and then gave the lad a shove and "go on."

Without a glance of resentment the child ran on. He turned south at the next avenue, then, later, eastward until he was in the thickly peopled tenement district. The shadows of the early spring evening had begun to fall. A flock of factory girls surrounded the boy with the "grand" flowers at one crossing, and each teased for the bouquet.

As he escaped a scowl settled upon his weazened face, for he saw that the size of his bunch was sadly reduced.

Then he took the middle of the roadway, dodging among the teams in the hope that he might not be further robbed of his precious gift.

But even here the boy and his bride roses were not safe. A taller boy would ever and again dash out upon him from the curb, tear a long stemmed rose from among its mates and taunt the little fellow, who simply pressed the straggling bunch closer to his breast and hurried along until he reached a narrow short street, where he turned abruptly in.

An excitement similar to that which had filled the air a few hours earlier before the handsome gray stone house seemed to now prevail in front of a gaunt miserable tenement. A long black wagon, with a pair of dark horses, was backed to the door.

A curious crowd thronged the sidewalk. Tousle haired, grimy-faced children gaped wonderingly. A cluster of women, each with a baby in her arms, were whispering together as the boy,